

MISCELLANEOUS.

Notes on the Habits of Menura Alberti.

By A. A. LEYCESTER, Esq.

THE *Menura Alberti* is famous for its most extraordinary mocking capabilities. It is found only on the Brisbane and Tweed rivers and in the neighbourhood of their waters. It inhabits the rushes, and generally chooses a sandy soil for its locality. I never saw more than a pair together, male and female. Each male bird has his walk or boundary, and gives battle if another male encroaches on it. He commences singing some time before the dawn of day, being the earliest of the forest-birds in this respect. His song is much varied, as, besides his own peculiar note, he imitates the cries of all the birds in the bush, such as the Laughing Jackass (*Dacelo gigas*), and even the mournful howl of the Owl and the thrilling scream of the Curlew. When singing and playing about, he spreads his tail over his back like a peacock. He scratches and pecks at the earth while singing, which he generally does until about an hour after sunrise. He then becomes silent, and remains so until about an hour before sunset, when he again commences, and continues singing and playing about until it is quite dark. This *Menura* feeds entirely upon insects, mostly small beetles, mingled with a goodly proportion of sand. It has no crop or upper stomach. The male bird is about four years old before he gets his full tail, as I have proved by shooting examples in full feather with the tail in four different stages of development; the two centre curved feathers are the last to make their appearance. It breeds in winter, commencing its nest in May, laying in June, and hatching its young in July. It generally builds on some bare rock where there is a sufficient shelter for a lodgment, so that no animals or vermin can approach. The nest is constructed of small sticks interwoven with long dry roots and moss, the inside being composed of the skeleton leaf of the parasitical tree-fern, which makes an inside lining, and is very similar to horse-hair. It is completely rain-proof, and has an entrance at the side. The hen lays only one egg, of a very dull colour, looking as if it had been blotched over with ink. The young bird when first hatched is covered with a white down, and remains in the nest about six weeks before it takes its departure. The flesh is not good for food, being of a dark colour, tough and dry. The aboriginal name is *Colwin*.—*Proc. Zool. Soc.* Feb. 14, 1860.

On Sertularia tricuspidata. By J. REAY GREENE, Esq.

To the Editors of the Annals of Natural History.

GENTLEMEN,—Mr. Andrew Murray, in his "Descriptions of new *Sertulariadae* from the Californian Coast," published at page 250 of the present volume of this Journal, has described a new species of *Sertularia* as *S. tricuspidata*.

But this name is preoccupied, having some years since been applied

by Mr. Alder to a well-marked British form of the genus. See his "Catalogue of the Zoophytes of Northumberland and Durham," in vol. iii. part 2 of the 'Transactions of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club.' See also page 356. vol. xviii. 2nd series, of this periodical.

I am, Gentlemen,

Queen's College, Cork,
April 10, 1860.

Your obedient Servant,

J. REAY GREENE.

On the Genus Huxleya. By J. REAY GREENE, Esq.

To the Editors of the Annals of Natural History.

GENTLEMEN,—In a paper by Mr. Arthur Adams "on some new Genera and Species of Mollusca from Japan," published in the last Number of this Journal, the title of *Huxleyia* has been conferred by the author on a new genus of *Lamellibranchiata* (vide p. 303).

Mr. Adams does not seem to be aware that the name *Huxleya* has already been given to a genus of *Polyzoa*. See "Notes on two new British Polyzoa," by Fred. D. Dyster, F.L.S.," in the 'Quarterly Journal of Microscopical Science,' 1858.

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On some young Hybrid Bears bred in the Gardens of the Zoological Society. By A. D. BARTLETT.

In the Bear-pit in the Gardens a male Black Bear of America (*Ursus americanus*) has been kept for a long time with a female of the European Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*). In the month of May these bears were seen to copulate, and on the 31st of last December the female produced three young ones; which, when born, were *naked* and *blind*, and about the size of a full-grown rat.

The mother was seen to carry one of these young ones in her mouth a day or two after they were born, and, as it disappeared, it is supposed that she devoured it. Probably it was not healthy. The other two remained and continued to grow, and at the age of five weeks were as large as a common rabbit. Their eyes began to open by this time; they were covered with a short thick fur, and were nearly black.

On examining these young bears it was found they were male and female, and the number and situation of the teats appears somewhat remarkable. They have six teats, four of them placed in front between the fore legs, and two of them in the lower part of the abdomen. Another singular fact is, that the female during the time she was suckling these young ones fed most sparingly, and rarely took any drink. From the before-mentioned observations we may infer that the period of gestation of the Bears is about seven months.—*Proc. Zool. Soc.* Feb. 28, 1860.